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ABSTRACT

An adjunct faculty member at a community college implemented and evaluated a practicum intervention designed to develop a teacher in-service education program promoting parental involvement and fostering communication between home and school. A series of sequenced in-service workships provided teachers and administrators with knowledge, understanding, and skills related to parental involvement in children's learning at personal, practical, and conceptual levels. Each in-service workshop included a pretest/posttest and a discussion of: (1) federal, local, state, and corporate policies which might affect parents and teachers; (2) family backgrounds directly influencing parental involvement in the schools; (3) effective communication skills; (4) methods for effectively conducting parent-teacher conferences; and (5) methods for increasing home-school cooperation and parental involvement. An evaluation was conducted in order to determine the most and least effective activities and materials in each in-service course. Workshops were offered to early childhood and elementary education teachers and administrators employed by a county school district. Results were positive. Teachers and administrators gained personal, practical, and conceptual knowledge, understanding, and skills concerning parental involvement in children's learning. Appendices provide measures and related materials; a 40-item reference list is included. (RH)

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The Development and Implementation of Inservice Workshops to Train Teachers/Administrators in Parent Involvement

by

Rochelle Robinson Warm

Cluster XXV

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1990

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Rochelle Robinson Warm under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Dec. 28, 1990
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

The Development and Implementation of Inservice Workshops to Train Teachers/Administrators in Parent Involvement. Warm, Rochelle R., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.
Descriptors: Parent Attitudes/Parent Participation/Parent School Relationship/Parent Teacher Conferences/Inservice Education/Professional Education/Teaching Guides/Staff Development/Parenting Skills/Parent Education.

This practicum was designed to train teachers and administrators in parent involvement. The primary goal was to develop a teacher inservice education program which would foster communication between home and school.

The writer developed and implemented a series of three sequenced inservice courses for teachers and administrators. The participants included early childhood personnel and administrators as well as elementary and secondary school teachers and administrators.

The results of the practicum were positive. Teachers and administrators gained personal, practical, and conceptual knowledge, understanding, and skills of parent involvement in children's learning.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The setting for this Practicum was one of four campuses of a community college. The campus presently serves approximately three thousand students ranging in age from 16 to 76 years. The average age of the students is 32.

The campus meets the needs of the students through a variety of programs:

* A university parallel program which prepares students for the Associate of Arts degree necessary for advanced and professional study.
* A vocational/technical program which provides Associate of Science degrees for students who wish to develop specific career skills or to train for entry level positions in business and technology.
* A college preparatory program to enhance students skills and to assist entry level skills for college work.
* A continuing studies program which is designed to meet community needs in lifelong learning through non-credit and certificate courses.

The practicum was under the auspices of continuing studies which provides inservice credit courses for early childhood and elementary education teachers as well as school administrators.

The writer is an adjunct faculty member, teaching an array of social science and early childhood education courses. The writer also designs and teaches a variety of inservice courses for teachers and administrators.

Inservice courses must meet the needs of County School Board employees by supplying appropriate courses within designated time frames. Each early childhood employee must participate in an accredited program for eight to ten hours of instruction per year. Teachers and administrators employed by the School Board must obtain 120 component points during a five year period to achieve license renewal. Each course must provide for ten hours of instruction within the designated subject matter.

The purpose of inservice education "is to provide opportunities, based on the priority needs of all departments and school centers...and to assist individuals in attaining and maintaining those competencies which enable them to perform effectively in their profession (Department of Human Resources and Organizational Development, 1988)."

The writer designs courses based on priority needs designated by the School Board, the State Department of Education, and Health and Rehabilitative Services, the early childhood licensing agency for the state.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Most colleges do not offer preservice or inservice courses for parent involvement. The majority of teacher training courses place their emphasis on classroom teaching skills. Similarly, courses for administrators are primarily concerned with administrative procedures and policies.

Teachers and administrators are required and encouraged to communicate with parents. Most schools require parent/teacher conferences. Oral and written communications between parents and teachers are more frequent than in the past.

Many school districts require teachers and administrators to work with parent advisory groups. To work effectively with advisory groups, one must possess effective leadership and communication skills.

If this situation were improved, teachers and administrators would possess the competencies necessary for parent/teacher communication. Parents would be encouraged to participate in their child's schooling through a variety of methods. Teachers would receive support and recognition from parents, families and the community. In an ideal situation, school administrators would possess a greater understanding of parent involvement programs.

The problem was inadequate or nonexistent training courses in parent involvement for teachers and administrators.

Problem Documentation

According to the Final Report of the State Comprehensive Plan Committee to the State of Florida (February, 1987), parents must be involved "in the education of their children in order for the state to achieve its goals." These goals include "an educated and motivated work force supported by adequate human services."

The population of the state includes an increasing number of minority students who are ethnically diverse and disadvantaged. "Home support is critical for early intervention programs to prevent dropping out... (Department of Education, 1988, p. 2)."

The State Department of Education held a forum entitled Youth At Risk For Parent Involvement (1989). The Commissioner of Education asserts that "the greatest factor in the success of a student is the support of one's parents." With this in mind, the Parental Involvement Task Force (1989) was established. The purpose of this Task Force was to examine "state employment rules, regulations, and practices as they relate to parental involvement in education."

The State in "recognizing the importance of parent involvement to student achievement and later success...has developed a Parent Involvement Plan (Castor, 1989)." The State has also developed a plan for involving minority and isolated parents in the education of their exceptional

students (1988). The Department of Education has created the 1990 Public Education Awareness Campaign on Family Involvement (1989).

Each of these plans included a mandate for teacher inservice training in parent involvement. "If you have a school that is not a good place and it's not a comfortable place and there is no mutual respect and trust, then there's a good chance that the parents are going to feel unwanted in that environment. Overall, you have to put in place the mechanism that will create a good school environment (Comer, 1989, p. 9)."

As a result of this and other supportive research, the Red Carpet Schools Award, part of the comprehensive Family Involvement Campaign, was put into place. All 67 school districts were asked to participate in this program. The first phase of the Red Carpet program was focused on training and awareness among educators "to ensure that we provide the friendly, welcoming atmosphere necessary to make the partnership work" (p. 8).

The second phase of the program included parents and family members. This phase continues to be under development, and it will commence after the educators are trained. Clearly the problem was recognized by the State, and the mandate for training of educators was the first step in addressing the problem.

Causative Analysis

The problem existed because it was previously not considered necessary to provide inservice training for parent involvement. The college provides inservice education based on priority needs as defined by the County School Board.

An examination of the School Board's manual, which describes inservice components, reveals a lack of courses pertaining to family or parental involvement. The majority of the courses are content or classroom/procedural based subjects. The State mandate for teacher/administrator education in parental involvement has created a priority need in the County. Therefore, the college has responded to this mandate and has provided inservice training for educators in parent involvement.

The Related Literature

The literature revealed several causes of the problem. Teachers have not been trained to work with adults and/or parents (Ost, 1988). Parents must possess appropriate personal and social skills to effectively work with school personnel. Parents with a feeling of self-worth can assist in improving competence in their children (Powell, 1989). Smith (1988) stated that, "'self-image as parent' was particularly significant as a predictor of ability to carry out the 'parent as educator' role" (p. 37). Parents who are self-confident are better able to set limits and provide clearer behavior guidelines (Rothenberg, Hitchcock, Harrison & Graham, 1983).

When teachers communicate effectively with parents and welcome them in school involvement, they assist with increasing the parent's social and personal skills. Seefeldt (1985) related that when parental involvement is designed to benefit the parents and is sensitive to the needs of families, improved self-worth is an outcome. Parental self-esteem is also enhanced through the teachers sensitive use of language (Seefeldt, 1985). Ost (1988) also stated that teacher-parent interactions change from preschool to secondary school. Teachers must be aware of this fact and may need to place more emphasis on their written communication skills in working with these parents.

Sleeter & Grant (1988) related that parents who have control over their own lives are better able to support the

school's efforts. Swick (1988) related that "parents who hold progressive beliefs tend to have a positive view of the future, a flexible learning style and a proactive stance in dealing with family issues" (p. 37).

Parents who adhere to appropriate parenting styles are good predictors of student achievement (Henderson, 1987). Swick (1988) also noted that parents who possess knowledge of child development are more effective at parenting. First time parenthood can be challenging and effective parents are able to call upon their personal experiences to prevent "a rigid re-enactment of their own childhood (Swick, 1988, p.37)." Teachers can enhance parental effectiveness by providing assistance with parenting skills which will, in turn, extend school learning into the home.

Teachers are saying that parental involvement is the single most important factor in improving scholastic achievement (Castor, 1989). Parental involvement also plays an important role in the social/emotional aspects of child development. When teachers encourage family involvement in the schools they help build the child's self esteem which, in turn, reduces discipline problems (Greenberg, 1989). Greenberg (1989) also related that motivation in children is increased when teachers respect parents. Links between the home, school and the peer group are related to children's enhanced behavioral problems. Bronfenbrenner (1986) discussed how these links help a child behaviorally as well as academically.

Parental involvement also assists with school attendance, peer relationships, and academic performance (Swick, 1988). Henderson (1988) related that "parents who involve themselves in school when children are having difficulty see a dramatic improvement" (p. 149). Additionally, low income and minority children attending programs with parental involvement academically outperform their peers when they reach high school (Henderson, 1988). Children whose parents are involved in school show an increase in developmental gains, language and motor skills, concepts, and problem solving (Swick, 1988).

Rich (1988) related that teachers have not been trained to work with families. Very few teacher education institutions offer preservice training in family or parental involvement (Greenberg, 1989). Yet, parental involvement has positive effects on the families involved in the various programs. Parent involvement increases communication between the home and school and helps to visualize parents as valued partners in the educational process (Cochran & Dean, 1982). Communication must be sensitive, professional, and respectful. Herrera and Wooden (1988) discussed how "certain kinds of oral and written communications from school alienate parents" (p.78).

Today's families are increasingly active and diverse. In effective parental involvement programs, families are

able to perform roles which compliment their daily schedules (Henderson, 1988). This enables families to help at their ability level and helps them to succeed at their efforts (Greenberg, 1989). Teachers who are taught to support a variety of family systems can help to strengthen the family system (Swick, 1988). An awareness of the dynamics of the single-parent families, foster-parent families, teen-parent families and step-parent families provides teachers with the knowledge to assist such families with their rebuilding efforts (Swick, 1989). Bermudez and Padron (1988) related the importance of teacher initiated contacts with families to promote parent-school partnerships.

Families need to be involved in schools on a variety of levels. Through parent involvement, parents gain satisfaction from helping to shape school policy (Dean, 1983). Parents also learn about their own children through contact with other families (Dean, 1983).

Powell (1989) discussed how parents develop competencies through parent involvement programs. These competencies will help them in dealing with other institutions.

Sleeter and Grant (1988) revealed that many teachers do not know how to involve parents and many doubt that low education level parents can be involved. On the other hand, some teachers resent a parent's higher education and/or socioeconomic level and feel inadequate in their dealings

with such families (Greenberg, 1989). Teachers need to be trained to understand their personal attitudes toward families and family involvement in order to be effective in promoting parent involvement programs.

Teachers and administrators must also be trained to understand the practical applications of parent involvement programs. An increase in parental involvement would also increase job demand on teachers (Williams & Chavkin, 1985a). Therefore, teachers must gain knowledge of the practical aspects of parent involvement which will match the needs of their program and compliment the aspects of their program which most support children's learning.

Parental involvement also has positive effects on teachers, schools and administrators. "Not only do individual children and their families function more effectively, but there is an aggregate effect on the performance of students and teachers when schools collaborate with parents (Henderson, 1988, p.150.)" Henderson (1988) also related that parental involvement encourages more effective programs which leads to more effective schools.

Gelfer and Perkins (1987) discussed how "the happiest and most successful teacher regards parents as partners and friends in the effort to educate children" (p. 19). Teachers begin to feel supported in their efforts to provide educational needs (Becher, 1984). Espinoza (1988) related

that when a school or district encourages parental involvement the results can be seen in greater cooperation, mutual support and understanding. Parental involvement programs allow for more effective home-school communication (Berliner & Casanova, 1985).

Becher (1984) discussed how teachers who are involved with parental involvement become more proficient in instructional and professional activities, become more involved in the curriculum, experiment more and develop more student-oriented activities.

Williams and Chavkin (1985b) in their study on teacher training in parental involvement discovered that "no teacher training materials existed that were research-based, systemized theoretically, logically sequenced, and accompanied by specific methods of teaching parent involvement to teachers" (p. 4). Castor (1989) stated that "school officials and teachers should...develop programs which help parents play a meaningful role in their child's education" (p. 1). Teachers must also be trained to embrace parent involvement on a conceptual level. This includes gaining knowledge and understanding of the history of parent involvement and the implications of current research on parent involvement to their specific programs.

Many school districts have partnerships with business and industry, but not with parents (Ost, 1988). Partnerships linking home, school, work and the community

must be established to provide for the well-being of children and their families (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Learning about parent involvement from a personal, practical, and conceptual framework assists teachers with knowledge and skills to develop partnerships with home, school, work, and the community.

The various disciplines touched upon in the literature review included psychology, education, and sociology.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

The goal of this Practicum was to develop a teacher inservice education program for parental involvement which will foster communication between home and school.

Behavioral Expectations

The following objectives were projected for this Practicum:

1. During each inservice course, teachers will show an increase in developing personal knowledge, understanding, and skills about parent involvement in children's learning by attaining a score of 80% on a pre-test/post-test (see Appendix A).

2. During each inservice course, teachers will show an increase in developing practical knowledge, understanding, and skills about parent involvement in children's learning by attaining a score of 80% on a pre-test/post-test (see Appendix A).

3. During each inservice course, teachers will show an increase in developing conceptual knowledge, understanding, and skills about parent involvement in children's learning by attaining a score of 80% on a pre-test/post-test (see Appendix A).

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

Extensive projects may produce unexpected occurrences. In order to accomodate unexpected events, the writer maintained a log (see Appendix C) for each inservice class. The log contained a summary of successful and unsuccessful methods. Each log was reviewed along with the evaluative tool (see Appendix B) to strengthen the delivery or materials of the next course.

Evaluation Instruments

Each of the three objectives was measured by a pre-test/post-test (See Appendix A) which encompassed questions on a personal, practical, and theoretical framework. This type of measurement device was chosen to determine a change in knowledge and attitudes following the implementation of each inservice course.

Each inservice course was evaluated by the use of a teacher-made, open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix B). This evaluative tool was chosen to assist the writer with feedback from each course. This information provided refinement of the mechanisms and materials of each inservice course.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Sleeter and Grant (1988) discussed the need for training teachers to involve parents on a continuum of low involvement to high involvement. They emphasized that the continuum serves three purposes: "it helps currently inactive parents learn what they can do"..."it provides involvement options at different levels for parents who are ready to work with their children's school"..."it recognizes that some children need much more active parent support than other children" (p. 3). McLaughlin and Shields (1987) also discussed educating administrators about the importance of enabling teachers to take initiative in involving parents. They also related the value of parent advisory councils as a means to decision making authority. Seefeldt (1985) concurred that the decision making processes of the school must involve parents and teachers to truly be a collaborative effort.

The writer agreed that teachers and administrators must be trained to allow parent involvement on various levels, with the ultimate goal being parent advisory councils to involve the home and the school in the decision making process.

Ost (1988) suggested that teachers need to be trained in the differences in parent involvement in urban, suburban, and rural schools. Additionally, educators must be trained to understand the techniques and methods for effectively involving minority and isolated parents (Department of Education, 1988). McLaughlin and Shields (1987) also discussed educating teachers about the merits of involving low-income or poorly educated parents in their children's education. The writer sees the need for a variety of parental involvement models based on cultural and economic diversity.

Bermudez and Padron (1988) related the importance of training teachers to acknowledge the informal education children receive at home. Rich (1988) also told us to "orient teachers to research on families as educators and equip them with strategies for reaching and teaching adults" (p. 91). Williams and Chavkin (1985b) suggested developing parental involvement courses for teachers around "research-based guidelines...to allow trainers flexibility in their approach to teacher training" (p. 5). The writer agreed with these statements and views parents as the child's first educator.

Swick (1988) discussed how professionals require staff development experiences to broaden their perspectives and strengthen their skills. Williams and Chavkin (1985a) also related the importance of training administrators in

parental involvement. Williams and Chavkin (1985b) also suggested approaching teacher training in parent involvement from a personal, practical, and conceptual framework. This includes studying their effects on parents' self image (Swick, 1988); allowing for changing societal roles (Manning, 1988); teaching honest, warm, respectful communication (Herrera & Wooden, 1988); and teaching skills ranging "...from conflict resolution and the development of empathy to situational analysis and creative problem solving (Dean, 1982, p. 6)." Dean (1982) also stated that teachers must be trained in the process of empowerment which emphasizes that the teacher-parent partnership can be strengthened. The writer agreed with the three pronged approach of training teachers from a personal, practical, and conceptual framework.

Williams and Chavkin (1985a) and Dean (1982) related the importance of training teachers in parental involvement through a series of sequenced workshops. The writer agreed with the authors and believes that several sequenced workshops provided teachers with time for reflection and discussion.

Description of Sclected Solutions

In reviewing the literature, the writer chose a solution which enabled teachers and administrators from a variety of districts to be trained.

A series of sequenced inservice workshops were designed which allowed for a variety of approaches to parent involvement. This strategy was chosen to provide teachers and administrators with knowledge, understanding, and skills about parental involvement in children's learning on a personal, practical, and conceptual level.

The workshops were offered to early childhood and elementary education teachers and administrators within the County school district. This strategy allowed professionals who serve in urban, suburban, and rural areas to broaden their perspectives on parent involvement.

The workshops served as an introduction to parental involvement in public and private schools and offered state mandated training. This strategy allowed teachers and administrators to strengthen their skills and maintain competencies which will enable them to be more effective within their chosen profession.

Report of Action Taken

The inception and presentation of each inservice course required a great deal of preliminary work. The writer designed a flyer to be distributed to all public and private schools within the County. It was necessary to determine the appropriate contact person at each institution to assure proper distribution of the flyer. In many cases the writer hand delivered the flyers or made extensive follow-up telephone calls. Additionally, the course was advertised in the School Board's newsletter and the bulletin distributed by the local child care referral agency.

All visual aids, course materials, handouts, and evaluative tools were prepared and/or assembled. The writer also prepared an extensive outline before each inservice course. Materials, handouts, and visual aids were added and/or deleted after reviewing the evaluative tools and course log from the previous inservice course.

The participants in each inservice course came from varying work settings and held a variety of positions. The writer found it beneficial to be flexible to the specific needs of the participants in each course and addressed individual situations whenever possible. Each inservice course ran for a period of two weeks and consisted of eight or ten hours of instruction. Teachers and administrators in the public school system desired a ten hour course to meet the needs of specific inservice components. Early childhood

professionals are required to attend eight hours of inservice classes per fiscal year. Each eight or ten hour course satisfied this requirement.

The first inservice course included materials from Cooperative Communication Between Home & School: An In-Service Education Program for Elementary School Teachers (Dean, 1982). This program includes a video tape, handouts, and numerous activities to encourage communication and interaction.

The writer also presented a variety of other materials and handouts which addressed the course objectives and the specific needs of the individual participants. These materials included a selection of articles discussing effective implementation of parent-teacher conferences and a variety of handouts which provided suggestions for increasing parent involvement in the school setting.

Each inservice workshop included:

* a pre-test/post-test to determine the participant's understanding and knowledge of parental involvement on a personal, practical, and theoretical level.

* discussion of various federal, local, state, and corporate policies which may affect parents and teachers. These policies include, but are not limited to, busing; federal legislation such as parental leave programs; personnel policies; corporate support of health insurance programs; school vacation days; and sick children of working

parents.

* discussion and understanding of a variety of family backgrounds which may directly influence parental involvement in the schools. A variety of issues such as single parents, blended families, and working parents were explored.

* effective communication skills such as listening well, saying what you mean clearly and respectfully, handling blame and criticism, and conflict resolution were explored.

* effective methods for conducting parent-teacher conferences were discussed.

* specific methods for increasing home-school cooperation and parental involvement on a variety of levels were advanced. These methods include using parents as participants in their children's education, as school volunteers and supporters and as participants in school decision making.

* an evaluative tool was used to determine the most and least effective activities and materials in each inservice course. This instrument was influential in the refinement of each inservice course.

The next inservice course contained a similar format to the previous course. The major differences in presentation were due to the teaching specializations of the participants. The group consisted of early childhood

professionals teaching grades kindergarten through three who are expected to have a great deal of parent involvement in their settings. The writer discussed a variety of parental involvement programs and methods for including ideas from these programs in their individual work settings.

The last inservice course contained materials from the Parent-Caregiver Partnership Project (Dean, 1990) as well as selected materials from the previous courses.

The participants in this inservice course were all non-degreed caregivers working in child care centers. Problem solving and conflict resolution skills were expanded to include such topics as school pick-up times, payment of fees, and sick children in child care. School directors and their employees attended this course. They were also interested in learning practical approaches to handling personnel policies.

The last step of the implementation period involved personal telephone calls to participants in each inservice course. The teachers were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of each skill area discussed in the workshop. The writer was also interested in discerning which parent involvement ideas and handouts were useful in the various school settings.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Objectives One through Three were measured by the participants' completion of a pre-test/post-test (see Appendices A & D). Due to the nature of this practicum the results of the pre-test/post-test for each inservice course must be evaluated individually.

During Inservice Course One, 10 participants completed the pre-test/post-test (see Appendix A). Nine out of the ten participants achieved a score of 80% by providing appropriate responses to 16 or 18 questions, which translated to a score of outstanding. Three of the participants were able to achieve the score of outstanding on the pre-test, while six participants achieved a satisfactory score (12 to 14 correct or 60 to 70%) on the pre-test. All of these participants achieved a score of outstanding on the post-test. Only one participant, a non-degreed early childhood teacher, had an unsatisfactory score of 8 to 10 correct, or 40 to 50%. This participant had difficulty understanding the pre-test/post-test and scored unsatisfactory on the post-test (see Appendix E).

The pre-test/post-test given during Inservice Course Two produced similar results. Seven out of 10 participants achieved a score of 80%. Only two of these participants were able to achieve a score of outstanding on the pre-test.

Five participants scored satisfactory on the pre-test and achieved a score of outstanding on the post-test. The three non-degreed early childhood teachers were not able to execute the pre-test/post-test and therefore remained at a score of 40% or less (see Appendix F).

The pre-test/post-test (see Appendix G) given during Inservice Course Three was chosen to measure the achievement of non-degreed early childhood teachers and administrators. While tallying the scores of the participants in the first two inservice courses, it was determined that non-degreed personnel had difficulty responding to the questions on the pre-test/post-test. This was attributable, in most cases, to limited language skills. Therefore, the writer devised another measurement tool designed specifically for such non-degreed early childhood teachers. (see Appendix F).

Eighteen of the 37 participants attained a score of outstanding on the post-test. This score reflects the positive achievement of seven to eight questions or 90 to 100%. Eleven of the 37 participants achieved a score of satisfactory, or positive responses to five to six questions (60-80%) (see Appendix G).

The results are overwhelming when one considers that during the pre-test only six participants were able to achieve a score of satisfactory (five to six questions correct or 60-80%), and 31 of the 37 participants were unable to positively respond to three or four of the test

questions (see Appendix G).

The Inservice Course Evaluation forms (Appendix B) were received by the writer after the completion of each inservice course. Table 1 summarizes the results of the course evaluations for the first inservice class.

Table 1. Course Evaluation Data for Inservice Course One

1. What exercises did you find useful in this Inservice course?

Creative Problem Solving	Role Playing
Brainstorming	Conferencing Skills
Parent Involvement Ideas	Group Discussions
Video & Discussion	Sharing of Ideas
Improving Communication Skills	

2. What would you like to see included in this course?

   Parents & teachers in the same class

   Specific situations and actual problems

   More parent involvement ideas

   Ideas geared to specific grade levels

3. Do you have any suggestions for the course facilitator?

   Share ideas with other schools/a variety of settings

   Use an overhead projector and acetates

   Include more videos

4. Would you like to see this course or similar ones offered during evening hours?

   All responded positively.

5. Would you like to see a similar course for parents?

   All responded positively.

The responses to the Course Evaluation form provided the writer with sufficient feedback to assist with refinement of the second inservice course. As a result of this information some specific changes were made. They were as follows:

* The inclusion of additional role playing exercises
* Group situations which addressed a variety of classroom grade levels were included.
* Some additional visual aids were added.
* The facilitator added more time for the discussion of actual situations and problems.

Feedback from the second inservice course is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Course Evaluation Data for Inservice Course Two

1. What exercises did you find useful in this inservice course?

Creative problem solving	Conferencing skills
Brainstorming	Group discussions
Parent involvement ideas	Role playing
Video & discussion	Improving communic. skills
Charts & visuals	Discussing actual problems
Ideas for specific grade levels	Sharing of ideas

2. What would you like to see included in this course?

   Some good ideas for beginning and ending the school year.

   How to help unresponsive or difficult parents.

   How other administrators get parents involved.

3. Do you have any suggestions for the course facilitator?

   More Videos

   Hold the course in a variety of settings

4. Would you like to see this course or similar ones offered during evening hours?

   All responded positively

5. Would you like to see a similar course for parents?

   All responded positively

Participants in this inservice course were enthusiastic in their responses. All 10 participants liked the group discussions and enjoyed the role play activities.

Feedback from this inservice course led to the inclusion of three activities in the next inservice class. They were as follows:

* An increased focus in a variety of communication skills and enhanced conflict resolution skills.
* Discussion and specific ideas to assist participants with unresponsive parents.
* Specific parental involvement ideas and suggestions from administrators.

Responses from Inservice Course Two also encouraged the writer to include parents in the next inservice course.

Inservice Course Three was attended by 37 participants, all in the early childhood field. Even though parents were invited and encouraged to attend, none chose to participate.

Table 3 summarizes the course evaluations for the third inservice course.

Table 3. Course Evaluation Data for Inservice Course Three

1. What exercises did you find useful in this inservice course?

Communication Blockers	Group situations
Group discussions	Problem solving

"I" messages as a means to communication

Handling blame, criticism and conflict

Looking objectively at different situations

Conferencing Skills

Sharing of homework experiences

2. What would you like to see included in this course?

More group work

Parents & teachers taking the course together

Entire staff should take the course together

How to help children communicate with us

A specific course for infant caregivers

3. Do you have any suggestions for the course facilitator?

Shorten the class time	Have smaller classes
Lengthen the class time	More videos
More class interaction	Leave out role play

Set down specific class rules for rudeness

4. Would you like to see this course or similar ones offered during the evening?

All responded positively

5. Would you like to see a similar course for parents?

All responded positively

The responses to course evaluation three further assisted the writer in knowledge for the refinement of classes and materials. Participants were not familiar with role play exercises and felt uncomfortable participating in them. The child care workers especially enjoyed methods of enhanced communication and handling blame, criticism, and conflict. All participants responded positively to these items.

Four of the participants were early childhood administrators. They all were enthusiastic about group discussions and suggested that the entire staff should participate in this course.

To assist the writer with the evaluation of each participant's knowledge and understanding on a practical level, the course work [in each inservice course] included a challenge or homework assignment. The challenge issued during Inservice Courses One and Two provided the participants with concrete ideas to apply in their school settings. Each participant was asked to incorporate one idea before the next inservice session. These ideas were shared and discussed at the beginning of the second session of each inservice course. This portion of the session enabled participants to apply practical knowledge based on personal values and conceptual understanding enhanced by the course.

The participants chose a variety of ways to involve themselves in the challenge. Several participants discussed parental involvement ideas with parents and were able to determine the interests and needs of specific parents. Three participants worked on improved communication with parents, and all found that listening skills were important. One participant completed a home visit which she had delayed and reported that "we were able to work out a plan to help the student with his classroom difficulties." One other participant was able to invite a parent to share his experiences with the class. She stated that "this made my student so proud and let the father know what a valued member of the school (he is)."

The homework during Inservice Course Three included asking participants to practice listening well in any situation while providing feedback learned during the first course session. These experiences were shared and discussed at the beginning of the second session and provided the writer with a glimpse of the participants' knowledge, understanding, and skills on all three levels.

The response to the homework was extremely enthusiastic. Comments included:

* I didn't realize how much unasked for advice I was giving."
* "I moralize too much."

* "When I actually listened to a parent, she appreciated my interest."
* "When a parent and I communicated I provided factual feedback, and this really opened the door."
* "I used eye contact and tried not to get distracted. It really worked."
* "I used 'I' messages. I said how I felt about the problem and the parent seemed to appreciate my honesty."

The writer was able to utilize the homework assignment in defining participants' additional needs and skills during the second session.

During the follow-up telephone calls to the participants in each workshop, the writer was able to determine the long range effectiveness of specific exercises discussed during each inservice course. The majority of participants in each course stated that they continued to use communication and listening skills. At least 50% of the participants felt that the conferencing skills information was very useful, and that they would continue to use these suggestions for more open communication.

All the participants surveyed enjoyed the parent involvement ideas and were willing or had begun to utilize some of these ideas in their classroom or school setting.

Conclusions

Objectives One through Three, which concerned increasing the teacher's personal, practical, and conceptual knowledge, understanding, and skills about parent involvement in children's learning, were met well within the desired limits as evidenced by data presented in the previous section. This goal was accomplished through a series of sequenced inservice courses. Williams & Chavkin (1985a) recommended that instruction in parent involvement be given through a series of sequenced workshops. This enabled the participants to return to the workplace with skills and knowledge of parent involvement and provided practical opportunities to apply this knowledge.

The teachers and administrators were able to return to the inservice course and employ formative evaluation techniques. The majority of early childhood teachers had never been encouraged to do this and therefore learned a great deal from this exercise.

Objective One, which concerned an increase in personal knowledge, understanding, and skills about parent involvement in children's learning, was met through a variety of methods. Teachers and administrators need to gain knowledge of their personal attitudes and beliefs regarding parent involvement. This was accomplished through responses on the pre/post-test, role play activities, brainstorming activities, and through group discussions.

Understanding of parent involvement was accomplished through a video and/or role play activities defining a variety of family backgrounds. Skills in using this knowledge and understanding were acquired through brainstorming and group discussion activities which focused on providing a plan for parent involvement activities in their specific school settings. These activities supported the contention of Sleeter & Grant (1988) that teachers may need help working through their previous negative experiences when working with parents. Becher (1984) and Ost (1988) also discussed the importance of replacing negative feelings, emotions, and defensive attitudes with personal understanding and openness. Galinsky (1990) spoke about the importance of teachers' personal attitudes about working mothers and how this related to their relationships with each other. According to Greenberg (1989), it is also important to view things from the other person's perspective. Teachers must also be willing to "give up some 'teacher power' to involve parents (Hall, 1989)."

Objective Two, which concerned an increase in practical knowledge, understanding, and skills about parent involvement in children's learning, was met through diverse means. Teachers and administrators were able to acquire knowledge of a variety of methods of parent involvement through responses on the pre/post test, group discussions, and through facilitator presentation of numerous parent

involvement ideas. Teachers and administrators need to understand which methods of parent involvement match the philosophy and needs of their individual programs. This was accomplished through the use of visual aids and group discussions. Competence in practical skills was achieved through activities in problem solving; conferencing; handling blame, criticism, and conflict; and communication skills. The homework or challenge exercise also provided an opportunity to practice skills in parent involvement. Practical application of skills also involved stages of parent-teacher interaction. Ost (1988) discussed the necessity of altering involvement to meet the needs of children from preschool to the secondary grades. Parent interaction changes, therefore teachers must adapt and suggest alternative methods of involvement to parents. Well planned conferences, an important part of parent-teacher involvement, can help avoid misunderstandings, result in mutual trust, and lead to effective communication (Bjorklund & Burger, 1987; Gelfer & Perkins, 1987; O'Brien, 1989). Becher (1984) related the importance of teachers' developing conflict resolution strategies rather than conflict avoidance. Exercises in conflict resolution were well received and among the most popular with teachers and administrators.

Objective Three, which concerned an increase in conceptual knowledge, understanding, and skills about parent

involvement in children's learning, was met through a variety of methods. Through group discussions, charts and visual aids, and brainstorming activities teachers and administrators were able to explore the developmental nature of parental involvement and research studies as they relate to their specific programs. A goal of the Parent-Caregiver Partnership Project (Dean, 1990) is to "help parents and caregivers see that (1) policies affect their lives profoundly and (2) they can learn about and influence policy." Teachers and administrators were able to openly discuss these policies and understand how their schools and families are affected by these policies.

Teachers and administrators also discussed Joyce Epstein's "Five Types of Parent Involvement" (Brandt, 1989). This was done to provide a conceptual and practical understanding of parental involvement on a variety of levels, ranging from parenting and the provision of an appropriate home environment to decision making and advocacy in the schools.

Three unexpected outcomes occurred as a result of the practicum. First, it was necessary to provide an alternative pre-test/post-test for the early childhood participants. Many of the non-degreed early childhood teachers possessed limited English reading and communication skills and required a great deal of additional explanation and attention. Second, several of the grade school teachers

and administrators possessed knowledge and understanding of personal, practical, and conceptual parent involvement in children's learning, but were deficient in skills to apply this knowledge to their programs. They wanted many "instant" ideas that could be used within their specific settings. Third, the writer (course facilitator), who possesses a varied background, was able to assist participants with specific problems and view situations from a variety of perspectives. This encouraged the participants in sharing their problems and helped them to perceive situations from another viewpoint.

The weekly log (Appendix C) enabled the writer to make note of new ideas for each sequential workshop. Continued research throughout the practicum assisted the writer with a variety of ideas and activities to include in the following inservice course.

Recommendations

The writer has seven specific recommendations based on the results of this practicum. First, teacher education institutions should offer preservice and inservice courses in parent involvement. The results indicated an interest on the part of teachers to explore parent involvement on a variety of levels. Second, teachers and administrators should be made aware of a variety of successful programs and practices in parent involvement. Third, courses in parent

involvement should include communication skills, conferencing, and conflict resolution. Fourth, a variety of teaching methods should be employed in each course to reach a variety of learning styles. These should include role play; group discussions and interaction; and a variety of videos and visual aids. Fifth, courses should be sequenced to allow practice of skills. Sixth, courses should be taught by a teacher or teachers with a variety of background experiences. The participants need to be able to relate to the facilitator and feel that he/she can understand their specific problems. Finally, administrators should provide parent involvement workshops for parents and teachers. Only then can we be certain that children will benefit from these programs.

The writer's recommendations are based on the premise that parent involvement in children's learning will assist with student achievement and success in learning.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum will be disseminated by the writer to the Cornell Empowerment Group, New York State College of Human Ecology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

A fourth inservice course in projected for the Summer 1991 school term and will include early childhood educators and parents.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PRE-TEST/POST-TEST

Pre-Test/Post-Test

These statements are paired. Place a "check" beside the one which most closely corresponds to your own attitude and beliefs.

Set A

1. Home and school are separate, very different worlds. It is the school's responsibility to educate children, and the parent's responsibility to see that the children are dressed, fed, and prepared for school.

2. Educators are trained professionals whose job is to teach children; the expertise of most parents is in other areas.

3. The most effective school organizational structure is one where decisions are made by the principal and carried out by teachers and staff.

4. Parents should cooperate with school policies and procedures, and should be active in providing general program support. Their primary role is to reinforce the school's efforts at home.

5. Parents have no place in educational decisions about school management, curriculum, or staffing. They delegate these tasks to educators.

6. When a child is having a learning problem in school, school personnel, including specialists, should investigate the nature of the child's problem. If it is serious, they should then inform the parents about their recommendations, and of any need for referral to outside specialists.

7. The problems most children have in school are based on their own character and personality and/or the home environment.

8. Every effort should be made to resolve school-wide problems using existing structures within the school system. If the teacher and the principal are unable to resolve a problem, they should turn to their administrative superiors in the district office.

9. Involving parents or the local community in solving a school problem will undermine local support for the school and damage its reputation.

Set A

10. Schools should not get involved in private family problems of divorce, teen pregnancy, maternal employment, or drug abuse. Nor should a school be expected to meet the problems of minority, foreign, or immigrant families. A school's function is to educate children, not babysit, counsel, or provide services for their families.

11. The needs and convenience of the school system should have first priority in determining the school schedule, calendar, and special events. Parents should make every effort to attend conferences and meetings at the times scheduled.

12. Parents have a number of tasks to perform to carry out their basic legal responsibilities. When parents do not fulfill these, we have to assume they are uncooperative and/or apathetic about their child's education.

13. It is the teacher's job to provide information about school curriculum and their child's progress to parents. Most parents have little to contribute in this area, as they are not educators or experts in child development.

14. Most parents are comfortable with leaving their children's education to skilled professional educators and do not want to intrude in school affairs.

15. Parents should be informed of any serious behavior problems their child has after school personnel have decided on a diagnosis and recommendation.

16. The school should not be expected to make special efforts to encourage parent attendance at special events, or organize activities for parents unrelated to the school program.

17. Only a few parents want to be very active in providing volunteer assistance to the school program.

18. Parents (or parent organizations) should provide basic information to other parents through newsletters, address lists, and educational meetings, but need not generally provide other supportive services to parents.

Set A

19. It is rarely appropriate for parents to provide input into program or policy decisions, or to help solve schoolwide problems.

20. It is accepted that parents have the right to express their dissatisfactions through regular administrative channels (first to the principal, then to the district or school board).

_____ Total Number of Checks in Set A.

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Pre-Test/Post Test

These statements are paired. Place a "check" beside the one which most closely corresponds to your own attitude and beliefs.

Set B

1. Schools share the responsibility for education with parents. The partnership with parents is flexible: on some issues the parents will be the more active partner; on others the school will be.

2. Educators and parents have complementary expertise about educating children which should be mutually respected and used.

3. Educators should work as collaborative teams with each other and with parents. Where possible, decisions should be reached by a consensus.

4. Parents should be involved actively, both in helping their children and in supporting the school program as a whole. Parents should be offered a wide range of opportunities to be involved, at home and at school.

5. Many educational decisions (even about curriculum and staffing) should be made with some input from parents.

6. When a child is having a learning problem, the school should consult promptly with the parents in a joint effort to understand the nature of the difficulty and to plan strategies to resolve it.

7. The problems children have are the product of interaction between the child, the school setting, and the home; no one person or factor is usually "to blame."

8. When a school-wide problem arises the teachers and principal should try at the outset to involve every sector affected, including parents, students, administrators, and the community.

9. Many school-wide problems cannot be resolved without community support and cooperation.

Set B

10. Recognizing that children's family problems can seriously impair their education, the school should assume some responsibility to respond to the special needs of working parents, divorced or separated parents, and minority or immigrant families.

11. In determining the school schedule, calendar and special events, the school should recognize the constraints on parents who are tied to rigid work schedules, long hours, and job sites far from home. It should consciously strive to find a balance among the needs of today's families, school personnel, and organizational efficiency.

12. Parents have a number of tasks to perform to carry out their basic legal responsibilities, but when parents fail to perform them, the school should try to help parents do so.

13. Teachers should create channels for two-way communication with parents; they should encourage parents to raise questions, share their knowledge of their child, and express their expectations and concerns.

14. Most parents want to be actively involved in their children's education. This interest should be welcomed and encouraged by the school.

15. Parents should be consulted when the school first becomes concerned about their child's behavior, and should be actively involved in developing strategies to deal with the problem.

16. When certain groups of parents do not participate in school events, the school should develop creative ways, with other parents' help, to overcome barriers to their participation.

17. The school should offer a wide range of volunteer activities for parents which make best use of their varied skills, resources, and time, and should expect each family to contribute some time to the school.

18. The parent organization should provide a newsletter, address lists, and educational programs to help parents. In addition, it should be alert to the special needs of some groups of families, such as those headed by single parents, and develop programs to meet these needs.

Set B

19. Parents should be offered a variety of ways to provide input into program and policy decisions and help resolve schoolwide problems.

20. The principal should provide clear guidelines to parents about which decisions are open for negotiation and shared decision-making, and which are not.

_____ Total Number of Checks in Set B.

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February 14, 1990

Dr. Rochelle Warm
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Dear Shelley:

Thank you for your nice letter asking to reproduce an exercise from Beyond the Bake Sale. The practicum you are working on sounds very good, and I am pleased to grant permission. The only condition is that you identify the source.

I have enclosed a flyer on one of our most recent publications, The Middle School Years, in case you haven't heard about it. Even though its primary audience is parents, there is a lot of information for educators, in a very readable format.

It is wonderful to know that our materials are being put to such good use. Please let me know it we can be of further assistance.

Best wishes.

Cordially,

Anne T. Henderson

ATH/lm

COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE EDUCATION OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN BY INCREASING PARENT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

APPENDIX B

COURSE EVALUATION FORM

Cooperative Communication
between
Home and School

Date:

School Name:

What exercises did you find useful in this inservice course?

What would you like to see included in this course?

Do you have any suggestions for the course facilitator?

Would you like to see this course or similar ones offered during evening hours?

Would you like to see a similar course for parents?

If your answer is yes, please discuss any suggestions you may have for presentation of such a course (program, location, times, materials).

APPENDIX C

WEEKLY LOG

Week _____

SUCCESSFUL METHODS:

WHAT WAS SUCCESSFUL ABOUT THESE METHODS?

UNSUCCESSFUL METHODS:

WHAT WAS UNSUCCESSFUL?

APPENDIX D

REVISED PRE-TEST/POST-TEST

1. What personnel policies/or lack of policies affect relationships between parents and caregivers?

2. What federal policies/or lack of policies affect relationships between parents and caregivers?

3. What is the ideal partnership between parent and caregiver?

4. What center (school) policies/or lack of policies affect relationships between parents and caregivers?

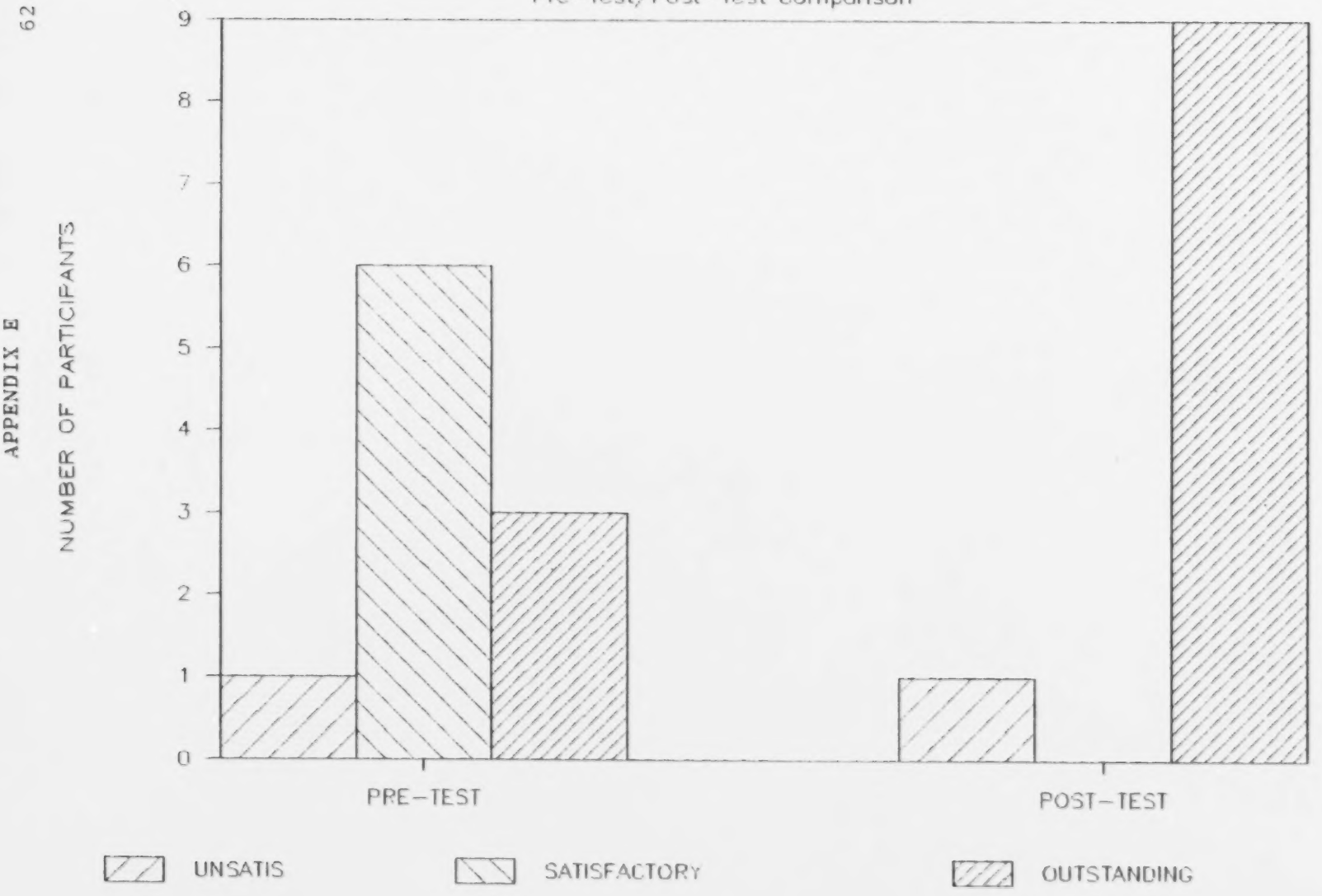
5. What are effective methods for handling blame, criticism, and conflict?

6. List five communication blockers.

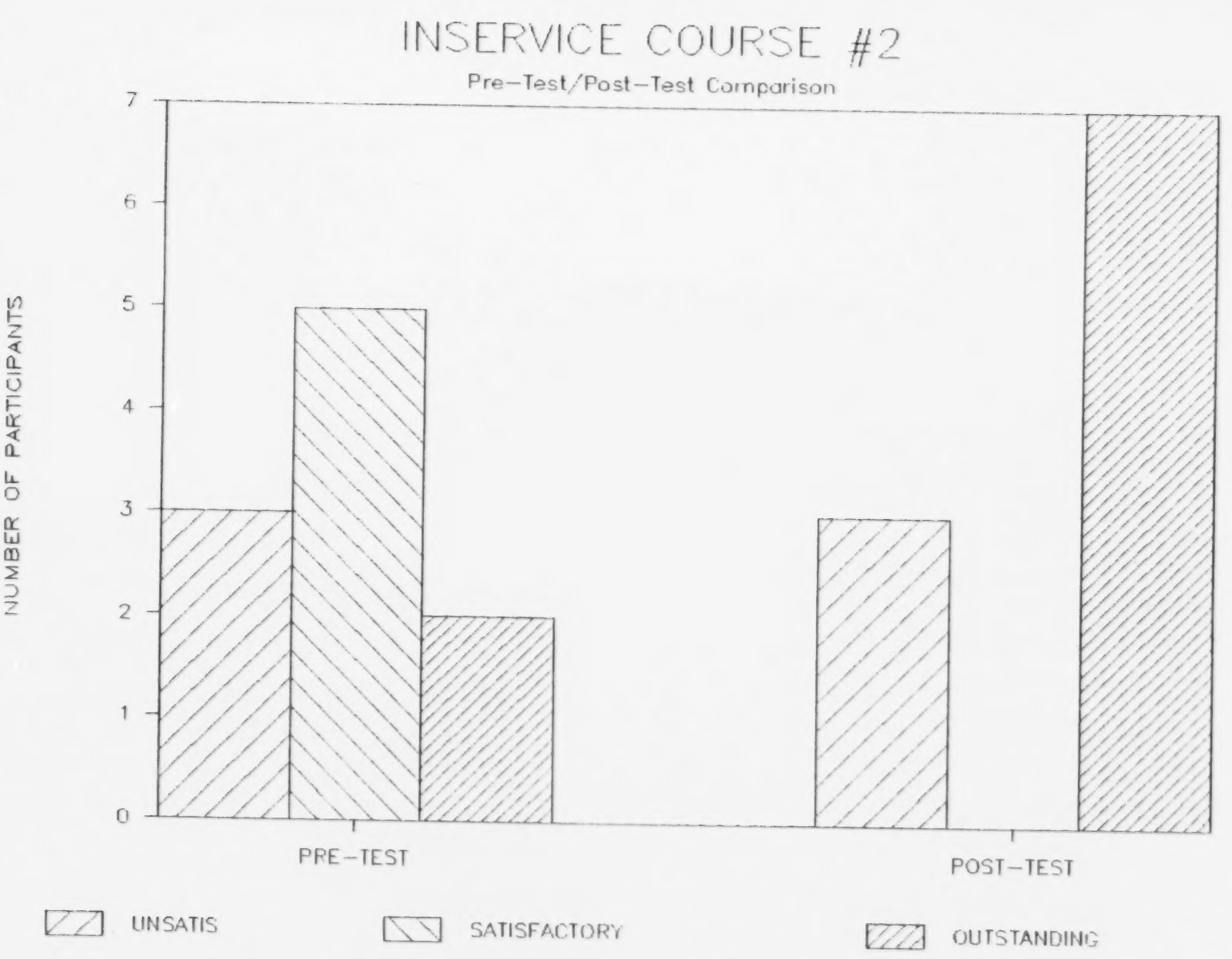
7. How can parents be actively involved in their child's education?

8. How can the school assist with children's family problems?

APPENDIX E


INSERVICE COURSE #1
Pre-Test/Post-Test Comparison
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
PRE-TEST
POST-TEST
UNSATIS
SATISFACTORY
OUTSTANDING

APPENDIX F


INSERVICE COURSE #2
Pre-Test/Post-Test Comparison
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
PRE-TEST
POST-TEST
UNSATIS
SATISFACTORY
OUTSTANDING

APPENDIX G

INSERVICE COURSE #3
Pre-Test/Post-Test Comparison
PERCENT OF TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
PRE-TEST
POST-TEST
UNSATIS
SATISFACTORY
OUTSTANDING